Table of Contents

1. Prologue
2. Chapter 1
3. Chapter 2
4. Chapter 3
5. Chapter 4
6. Chapter 5
7. Chapter 6
8. Chapter 7
9. Chapter 8

Prologue

"A *kittypet?*" blurted a gray she-cat. Dark flecks patterned her fur, and her blue eyes glittered with disbelief. "A *kittypet* can never be a warrior, Redstar . ThunderClan has pure warrior blood through and through, and I will not let a *kittypet* destroy that line!"

Redstar, a dark ginger tom with yellow eyes, gave a long sigh of exasperation. "Seedpelt," he began, struggling to stay calm. "How many times do I have to tell you - background doesn't count. It's the potential of the cat that counts." He waved his paw through a puddle that lay at their feet. An image of a cat appeared - a brown and white tabby with wide, curious green eyes that shone like twin moons. Her eyes were fixed on a movement before her, and she was lowered to a crouch. She pounced, and the image shimmered and faded away.

Seedpelt hissed, her teeth gnashing with defiance. "Redstar, this is a kittypet. She comes from Twolegplace, just like those Twolegs that drove Cloudstar and his Clan away!"

Redstar flinched, shooting a sharp glance at Seedpelt. "Do not mention his name!" he growled. "You do not have to remind me of that day." The old feeling of regret dragged at his heart. *I could have done something,* he thought remorsefully, but then shook his head firmly. *What is done is done.* Redstar raised his head to meet Seedpelt's eye before she could speak. "Her fate has already been decided, Seedpelt. It is up to her to make the right choices."

Seedpelt sniffed with disapproval. "Whatever, Redstar," she muttered, stalking away. "You'll see - kittypets mean trouble. Don't come to me wailing that I was right. You can't trust an outsider."

The image of the tabby kittypet was still in his mind. He glanced at the puddle again, and a faint image appeared. This time an orange kitten was curled at the kittypet's feet. Redstar couldn't help but smile. *Maybe not all outsiders are bad,* he thought.

Chapter 1

[image]

Green pierced the black of the night. A shape moved through the bracken, silent and swift. Faint paw-steps echoed off into the still air of the night. Nutmeg entered a small clearing of the dense forest, and moonlight shone down on her, revealing her brown, striped fur. Her white patches glowed like white flames, clashing against the dark shadows. Suddenly, twigs crunched and snapped. The tabby spun around in alarm, unsheathing her claws. They were blunt and harmless, yet they looked threatening in the eery glow of the forest. Despite her confident and straight posture, Nutmeg's heart raced and her green eyes sparked with panic.

"Wh-who's there?" she demanded, her voice shaking. *Crunch, snap, crunch.* Nutmeg hissed fearfully. "Show yourself!" she growled daringly, but her voice squeaked like a kit's. She gave a yelp at the sound of a voice behind her. She spun around, her eyes wild with dread. A large dark brown tabby stood behind her, his eyes green like her own. Nutmeg hissed with alarm as the stranger approached. "What do you think you're doing here, kittypet?" asked the voice. Nutmeg took a moment before replying. The tom's voice was not threatening, but rather calm and curious. "Your kind don't seem to venture this far into the forest," he added.

Your kind. Nutmeg twitched an ear. *Kittypet.* "Nothing," she replied defensively, feeling a little less alarmed. "Just exploring. Is there a problem, er..."

"Pinestar," the cat told her. "My name is Pinestar."

"Pinestar," she echoed. The name felt awkward on her tongue. "Yes, is there a problem, *Pinestar?*"

"Well," the newcomer rumbled. "You are on ThunderClan territory."

"*ThunderClan?*" Nutmeg repeated with confusion. "*Territory?*"

Pinestar blinked. "You haven't heard of the Clans that roam these forests?" he asked with surprise. Nutmeg shook her head, so he continued. "There are four Clans. ThunderClan - that's my Clan - WindClan, RiverClan and ShadowClan. We all live by a warrior code and hunt our own food. There are so many rules a warrior must obey. Warriors must be loyal to their clan and leader, overall. I am ThunderClan's leader, meaning I perform ceremonies, lead my cats into battle..."

After a long while of listening and learning, Nutmeg's eyes were wide with fascination. "So you even *fight* each other sometimes?" she gasped. "And I can't believe you hunt your own food... I mean, I've tried hunting, but I never *eat* my prey."

Pinestar's whiskers twitched. "Well, that is the life of a warrior," he meowed. "You should move along, before my patrol finds you."

Nutmeg blinked. "But I wanted to ask a few-"

"Some wonders are best answered with experience," the leader meowed meaningfully. His eyes regarded Nutmeg thoughtfully, and the she-cat's eyes widened as he continued. "Perhaps you'd like to join ThunderClan. I cannot promise you shelter and food all the time, but to feel the wind in your whiskers and the fresh tang of prey is a great privilege."

Nutmeg's tail-tip quivered with excitement. "Really?" she gasped, and Pinestar nodded. "Then I accept," she purred. She was barely able to stop herself from giving a leap of joy.

Chapter 2

[image]

Nutmeg woke with a jolt. This time it wasn't the blinding sunlight filtering through the large window above her nest - it was her excitement.

"A warrior... I'm going to be a warrior!" she breathed to herself, her heart racing. She stood, stretching the sleep from her legs as her jaws gaped in a wide yawn. Her body was slender and thin, much different to the ThunderClan leader she had encountered the night before, who muscular and sturdy frame, fit to take down a badger single-pawed.

The young she-cat made her way to her food bowl. Her housefolk refilled it every night and afternoon. The brown, dry pellets didn't seem appetizing to her anymore; instead she would've liked to sink her teeth into a plump, juicy mouse. She ignored her food bowl and leapt up onto the window ledge, squeezing through the narrow, open gap and landing in the soft grass of her front yard.

"Meet me at the large oak tree tomorrow," the tom had told her. She could see it now, from where she sat on the fence - its branches stretching into the wide blue sky, leaves swaying delicately in the gentle newleaf breeze. The forest... soon it would be hers. Well, maybe not hers as it was Pinestar's, but it would be her home. Every muscle nagged at her to charge towards it now to wait for the leader, but Nutmeg wanted to stay where she was for a while longer. She flicked a glance over her shoulder, looking at the big twoleg nest that was hers - nay, *was once* hers. Would her housefolk miss her? Surely they would. Images flashed before her eyes. She purred as she felt the soft twoleg paw running along her back, then her eyes gently closed as she dozed comfortably in the male twoleg's lap before the fire.

She forced herself to turn her attention back to the vast land of trees that spread out before her. No, it was better to try and ditch those thoughts as best she could, for they might tempt her back. She

knew what she wanted with her life now. And it was the life of a wild cat. Not just the life of any wild cat, but that of a warrior. She could see it now. The fear in the eyes of her enemies as she struck them down, her Clanmates beside her. She could feel the triumphant satisfaction of a successful hunt. Yes, this life seemed far better than being a pampered housecat. The thrill of the hunt and battle was much more alluring.

"Why am I even dwelling on it?" she murmured as she bunched her muscles, leaping down from the fence, grunting at the impact of her paws colliding with the ground. The oak tree seemed so close now. Nutmeg took a deep breath and bounded towards it. *There's no going back now...* she thought. She skidded to a halt at the tree, and stared up. The sky was barely visible, yet this gave her a strange feeling of protection, almost as if the leaves were wrapping around her like some kind of shield or armor. The bark was dry and sturdy. She dug the claws of a paw into it, tearing her claws down. She did this a while longer, her other paw joining in. She brought her paws away from the tree, examining her claws. They were sharper now, their points threatening.

Suddenly, leaves flew as a shape bursted from the ferns. Nutmeg let out a hiss of alarm, which turned into an uncomfortable grunt as her back was slammed against the ground, the breath being knocked from her.

"So you want to be a warrior?" a voice murmured in her ear, masculine and calm, its coldness almost dangerous. *"You've got a lot to work on... even the youngest kit in the nursery would be able to tell if a cat was nearby."*

Nutmeg gasped and fought for breath as the stranger let her up. She scrambled to her paws, trembling.

Nutmeg steadied herself, forcing herself to raise her head and meet the piercing amber gaze of the yellow-furred tom. His green eyes regarded her with curiosity. "Pinestar told me about you," he told her, beginning to circle the kittypet. "I'm Sunfall. His deputy. He sent me to get you."

The tabby she-cat shuffled her paws. She had been hoping the

leader himself would come to see her again and be the one to take her to his Clan. He was nice, and his voice and a rumbling warmness to it. At least this tom wasn't too bad.

"I'm Nutmeg. I met Pinestar yeste-"

"I know all about it. Trust me." He smiled briefly and turned. "He's had his eye on you quite a while. So have I. You know, your hunter's crouch could use some work." And with that, he bounded off.

Nutmeg blinked. Was he leaving him?

"Are you coming?" the ThunderClan deputy called, and Nutmeg heard the crunching of his pawsteps slow.

"O-Oh... er, of course!" Her tail bristled with excitement as she charged after him. Her ears pricked with delight as the birds sang, almost as if welcoming her to the forest. The leaves and grass were warm, their crunching seeming to murmur, *"welcome."*

Chapter 3

"Welcome to ThunderClan."

Nutmeg stared at the sight before her - a rocky clearing, busy with cats of all shapes, sizes and pelts. "Wow..." she murmured. "I wasn't expecting this many cats... nor a camp of this size..."

Sunfall snorted. "Well, we've got to have enough numbers to win a battle, don't we?"

"I guess so."

The unfamiliar Clan cats seemed to have scented the foreigner by now. She caught a few curious glances being shot towards her, and some heads bent close together, murmuring. Nutmeg felt heat rise in her ears. They were all looking at her. She bristled anxiously. Though she knew that they wouldn't attack her, their battle-scarred pelts and muscular frames unnerved her. She knew she must stand out like a mouse among dogs.

"They won't bite. Sure, a few of them might not like the idea of a former kittypet in the Clan, I can warn you about that, but they'll get used to it. And if they don't like it, that's their problem."

Nutmeg felt some reassurance in his honest words, though she kept her head down as he followed the deputy closely. Dens of bracken and bramble thickets spread out through the ravine. Her green gaze followed the mangy brown pelt of a tom as he disappeared into a well-covered den.

"That's the nursery," Sunfall informed her, noticing the tabby's interest. "Mumblepaw must be cleaning the bedding."

"Mumble*paw?"* she wondered aloud.

"Our kits are born with a first name, such as Mud or Snow. Their

suffix represents their rank. For example, kits would have a name like Mudkit, apprentices would have their names end with a *paw,* such as Snowpaw. When it comes to warriors, there are many different options. Blackfur, Sageheart, Wolfclaw... those names aren't even the start."

"I see..." Nutmeg murmured. These Clans were... organised. It seemed appealing to her, in a way.

"Oh, and leaders' names always end with *star.* Examples are Pinestar, Cedarstar - that's ShadowClan's new leader - Heatherstar - that's WindClan - and Hailstar, who's RiverClan's leader."

"ShadowClan, WindClan and RiverClan... the four other Clans. That's a lot to remember."

Sunfall shrugged. "I suppose you get used to it after a while. We're here."

Nutmeg gazed up at a tall, rocky ledge of stone with awe. Pinestar sat upon it, his green gaze alert. Sunfall and Pinestar exchanged a nod, and the brown tabby leader made his way down the rock in a few neat bounds.

"You came," he greeted the young she-cat, his eyes warm with pride.

Nutmeg stood tall and nodded, raising her chin. "Of course I came! This was an opportunity I would never give up!"

"Is it decided?" Pinestar looked at his deputy.

Sunfall nodded, and with that, the leader climbed the great rock again.

"Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather beneath the highrock for a Clan meeting!" The leader's voice rang boldly across the ravine, echoing strongly against the rocky slopes of the ravine. Cats poured out of their dens, and some had already positioned themselves below the ledge.

"Are we all here?" Pinestar called, which was returned by a nod

from his deputy.

"Then let the meeting begin. I gather you all here to announce the arrival of a new warrior. Nutmeg, step forward."

Nutmeg stared, not sure of what to do, until Sunfall nudged her up the highrock. She scrambled to the top ungracefully until she reached Pinestar, her pelt burning as her ears flattened against the amused and mocking snorts of the Clan cats. Her red collar seemed to tighten around her neck as she flinched from a sneering caterwaul - *"A kittypet?* Pinestar, what are you thinking? Her paws are far to soft to clash against even a slow and plump-bellied RiverClan cat!"

"Stormtail, please," the ThunderClan leader growled, his voice toned with warning.

Nutmeg shrunk against the ground. *Maybe this isn't going to be as easy as I thought..."*

Chapter 4

[image]

"A kittypet, Pinestar? You must be joking!"

Sunfall bounded towards Stormtail, snarling, and the crowd of cats backed away to give the two room. "Shut your greedy muzzle!" he spat. "Maybe one day this *kittypet* will become a better hunter than you!"

Stormtail lashed his tail furiously and rolled his eyes. "Hedgehogs would fly before that happened!" he muttered, shooting a furious glare at the kittypet who crouched beside Pinestar on the highledge, his eyes as cold and blue as the endless deep of the ocean.

"Yeah! Kittypets can't hunt or fight! Look at her! She even *looks* weak. Those legs and paws could never chase down a squirrel!" called a young, feminine voice. Nutmeg peered over the sea of pelts and noticed it came from a silver-gray tabby she-cat with yellow eyes as pale as the sun sinking below the vast horizon. Sunfall winced. "Moonpaw," he sighed. "I know you've been following Stormtail around like a duckling after its mother, but this isn't something you're a part of. Nor are you," he added with a narrowed glare at the blue-eyed warrior. Sunfall glanced over his shoulder at Pinestar as the leader called out a warning, but he ignored it. "As I was saying, Stormtail. You're not the leader, are you? Pinestar is, and I'm his deputy," he growled, his voice cold and dangerously calm. "*We* make the decisions. The leader's word is law. Remember that? Or have you forgotten the warrior code?"

Warrior code? Nutmeg wondered as she stared down at the two conflicting cats; an amber pelt, blazing like the rays of the sun, and a dark gray pelt, the color you would see in the skies as thunder and lightning battled. She was unsure of what to do - the insults stung her more than they infuriated her.

"That's enough!" Pinestar yowled and Sunfall and Stormtail broke apart, challenging each other with furious glances. "This was a

meeting to discuss this in peace!" he growled with warning. Sunfall hissed as he backed away while Stormtail stared at the ground and shuffled into the crowd of cats, as if hiding from shame. Nutmeg could feel his enraged gaze on her as she held her head low.

Pinestar waited until complete silence and stillness spread across the meeting of cats before continuing. "Kittypet or not, she bears the potential of becoming a great warrior, just as any newborn Clan kit does. Nutmeg is one of the first cats from twolegplace to have the courage to follow the path *StarClan has set out for her."*

A white tom with gray flecks lowered his pale blue gaze as Pinestar spoke the last few words. Nutmeg blinked. *'The path StarClan has set out for me...? Maybe I should ask that white cat. He looks like he might have something to do with this...'* she pondered.

"Do I have any objections against the will of StarClan?" Pinestar asked the assembly, his voice firm and cold.

"The *will of StarClan?"* came a familiar voice. Nutmeg sighed, shifting awkwardly. It was Stormtail again. "Since when has StarClan had anything to do with some weak twoleg toys?" spat the warrior.

"I have seen it," murmured a new voice, raspy and uncertain. It was the gray-flecked tom, his blue gaze wistful, yet seeming to have a sort of stubbornness to it. "The ancestors of the forest have shown me."

Pinestar's eyes darkened. "We were there."

Stormtail's fur bristled. "You expect me to believe you?" he sneered at the quiet tom. "Honestly, Goosefeather. How many times have you claimed to have shared tongues with our ancestors and kept our Clan safe by their word?"

Goosefeather raised his haunches, muscles bunched tensely as he hissed through his yellow, ragged teeth. "Everyone makes mistakes!"

Pinestar was shaking his head. "That's it!" he yowled, his voice tinged with frustration. "This won't work. I'm holding this meeting

another time. Clan dismissed!"

The cats fell silent, watching the leader disappear from the highrock and into his den. Nutmeg lowered her head, her ears flat. She turned her head as she heard the pawsteps of Sunfall approaching behind her. The deputy sighed and nudged her shoulder. "Come on. I think it's best if you sleep in the medicine den tonight. Stormtail will only get worse if you're near him."

Nutmeg stood uncertainly and gave a faint nod. Movement caught her eye as she noticed Goosefeather disappearing into the den which had earlier been introduced to her as where the medicine cats slept. If she were to stay there tonight, maybe she could get some answers! Nutmeg followed Sunfall as all stings of rejection vanished, curiosity and excitement washing them away.

Chapter 5

[image]

"It's none of your concern, kittypet," muttered the gray-flecked medicine cat.

"But I'm the prophecy cat! Surely it's better if I know?" Nutmeg protested.

"It's not a *prophecy!"* Goosefeather hissed with annoyance, his tail twitching violently.

"Fine! It's not a prophecy. But it's *something!"*

"It's not important."

"Yes, it is!"

"No, it's not."

"Yes, it is!"

"Shut your muzzle before I shut it for you!" spat the medicine cat.

Nutmeg muttered something under her breath.

"What was that?" growled Goosefeather.

"Nothing!" Nutmeg mewed quickly.

The white and gray tom raised his pale gaze to the roof of the den, sighing with exasperation. "Great StarClan! Why couldn't it have been kit with a trace of *sensibility?"*

"I'm sensible!" huffed the tabby she-cat. "And I'm not a kit!"

"How old are you again?"

"Nine moons!" Nutmeg puffed her chest out proudly.

Goosefeather snorted and rolled his eyes. "That's apprentice age. Yet you *act* like a kit."

"I do *not!"* wailed Nutmeg.

"Case in point," he muttered as he stood. He raised his voice as he meowed, "You can nag me all you want, but I'm not going to give you answers you want."

The she-cat lashed her tail. "Why not?" she begged.

"Not all things are for every cat's ears," he murmured, making his way to his nest. "I'm done talking for today. Get some rest. You'll need it for tomorrow."

Nutmeg twitched her tail anxiously for a few moments before sighing with submission. She sunk into the nest of feathers and moss and wrapping her tail around her nose, she closed her eyes, allowing the heaviness of sleep to overcome her.

"Let the Clan gather!"

Nutmeg woke to the yowl of the ThunderClan leader. She took a moment to stretch and blink the sleep from her eyes before standing, allowing herself to adjust. The young she-cat made her way out of the den, scrunching her eyes against the bright morning sun.

"I will not allow any interruptions today," Pinestar warned with a harsh look at Stormtail, who flattened his ears and tossed his head defiantly before leaning over and murmuring something to the silver apprentice, Moonpaw, as she stood beside him.

"Nutmeg, step forward."

The kittypet's eyes widened, though she had been expecting her ceremony. The cats reluctantly parted to let her through. She ignored a small gray kit who whispered, "She smells funny!"

"Featherkit, hush!" hissed the kit's mother.

"This young cat has chosen to stray from her comfortable life as a kittypet. From here on, there is no turning back. Nutmeg, do you wish to join ThunderClan?"

Nutmeg felt the expectant stares on her pelt as she boldly replied, "I do."

Pinestar and Sunfall blinked with satisfaction and pride. "Then from this moment on, you will be known as Nutpaw," the tabby leader announced. "Your mentor will be..."

Nutpaw's whiskers quivered with excitement as she glanced aside, her eyes scanning over the different and unfamiliar faces, wondering who it might be.

"... Sunfall."

Her eyes brightened as she met the deputy's gaze. "Yes!" she purred as the amber tom strode over. "Hush," he silenced her, though his eyes shone with delight. The new apprentice and mentor touched noses. "Welcome to ThunderClan," Sunfall whispered.

"Nutpaw! Nutpaw! Nutpaw!" cheered the Clan.

Chapter 6

"No, no, no. Like this."

Nutpaw grunted as she copied Sunfall's position; crouched down low, tail low, paws tucked slightly below her chest.
"Better," her mentor praised. "Now, try stalking forward."
Nutpaw focused on a large, dried-up leaf on the grass before her and shuffled forward, trying hard to keep her rear down and pawsteps quiet.
"Come on, I've seen a badger do better!" Sunfall urged.
The tabby she-cat readjusted herself and scooted forward, this time finding it a little more comfortable.

"There you go, that's how it's done," the amber-pelted deputy purred. A few days had passed since she first joined the Clan. Pinestar made sure Stormtail was too busy with patrols and hunting to bother her, and for that, the tabby apprentice was grateful. *'I'll show him!'* huffed the young apprentice silently. *'I'll show him that I can be one of the best warriors ever!"* With this thought, she readied her haunches and sprung forward, paws outstretch. She grabbed it with her paws and let out a small trill of delight. "I did it! I did it, Sunfall! Did you see that? I did i-"

"Yes, yes," purred Sunfall, approaching his apprentice and giving her a slow blink of approval. "That was great."
Nutpaw beamed proudly, and her eyes widened at what her mentor suggested next; "Why don't you try it on real prey now?"
The eager apprentice stood tall, her brilliant green eyes glimmering with enthusiasm. "Yes, Sunfall!"
"I'll wait here. I expect you to return with two pieces of prey."

"You bet!" And with that, the small tabby she-cat darted off, kicking up leaves. She found herself making towards the twolegplace, and she slowed her bound to a walk, raising her pink nose in the air and parting her mouth, scenting for any sign of prey. Her scent glands sang with the dusty, piney smells of the forest, her ears pricked happily against the chorus of whistling birds. "I can't believe I've

been missing out on all this..." she murmured to herself.

"It really is quite beautiful, isn't it?"

Nutpaw spun around, her eyes growing wide like twin moons of green. Before her stood an orange tabby tom, maybe a moon or so older than her. His eyes were green like hers, their pools calm and leisurely. Nutpaw tilted her head. This stranger didn't seem like a threat. She forced her fur to lay flat and greeted the unfamiliar tom.
"Hi," she mewed. "I'm Nutpaw. Who are you?"
The tom lifted his tail. "Well, you're the first forest cat that hasn't tried to tear my ears off."
Nutpaw blinked. "Well... I'm not much of a fighter... not yet, at least. I'm training to be a warrior of ThunderClan!" she added with an enthusiastic mew. "But I've still got heaps of training to do."
"ThunderClan warrior..." The tom's whiskers twitched.
"What?" huffed Nutpaw.
"Nothing. Just you lot have strange names. Nutpaw, Pinestar, Mumblepaw, Larksong..." he murmured.
"You know Pinestar?" Nutpaw's eyes filled with surprise.
"Of course. You and him, the only peaceful *Clan cats,"* he snorted.
"By the way... you didn't answer my question. What's your name?" the apprentice repeated.
"Oh, right." The orange tabby smiled.

"My name's Jake."

Chapter 7

'Jake...' Nutpaw noted. She gazed into the calm and steady green gaze of the flame-pelted tom.
"Well, I think I should continue hunting," Nutpaw mewed hurriedly. "I don't think Sunfall would be pleased if he found me talking to a kittypet!"
Jake sat and drew a paw over his ear leisurely. "You're not going to chase me out?" he asked with slight surprise.
Nutpaw shifted nervously. He was right. If Sunfall found this kittypet within their borders, along with her scent, he wouldn't be happy with her at all. But still... outsider or not, this cat was kind, which was something she needed, seeing how Stormtail and so many other cats in the clan treated her.
"Well..." she mumbled. "I mean, if you just found a nice place outside the border, I'm sure it'd be fine," she suggested hesitantly.
The orange-pelted tom's whiskers twitched and he stood slowly, stretching his paws out in front of him, claws flexing into the ground and obviously making a great deal of taking his time.
Nutpaw's tail twitched anxiously. "Hurry up," she snapped. Sunfall could be watching her, or he could be looking for her. She had been out for a while now. "Please?" she added with a glint of desperation in her wide green eyes.
Jake's eyes shimmered with a hint of amusement at the brown tabby's anxiety and impatience, making Nutpaw bristle a little. "It's not funny!" she retorted quietly - she didn't want Sunfall to hear them, either. "I'll get in trouble if I'm found! I-I might even get kicked out of the clan!" she added, the fur on her shoulders bristling like pine needles.
"Okay, okay," Jake sighed, his tail swaying low over the ground as he watched her a moment longer before turning away and heading off towards the border.
Nutpaw sighed with relief, only to spin around with alarm as an exclamation of surprise and pride rang behind her. Sunfall stood there, watching her, his chest puffed out as he beamed with approval.
Nutpaw flinched, feeling the fluttering of panic's wings flail

desperately around her stomach, rising to her throat. Had he seen her talking with him peacefully? No... that couldn't be the case... Look how proud he looked!
"I can't believe you'd managed to chase a stray from our territory!" the deputy purred.
Nutpaw winced slightly. Part of her wanted to tell him the truth, no matter how disappointing it would be for him. But the other side of her wanted to bask in the pride of something she hadn't even truly done.
"B-But I should've been hunting..." she mewed hesitantly.
Sunfall rolled his eyes good-naturedly. "Well, that, as well. But we still have plenty more time for that. Let's continue with it, eh? I'll see if I can catch something myself! The clan could have a feast tonight."
Nutpaw nodded faintly, her fur spiked with shame as she turned and trotted off, her mouth parted slightly to drink in the scents of the forest.
Despite the fact that she had almost been caught, and that she was risking a lot, she wanted to see him again. She wanted to meet... Jake. That was his name.
"Jake..." she murmured aloud. The name felt strange on her tongue - she was already so used to the names of the forest cats.
She shook her head to clear the scrambling thoughts in her mind. *'Enough of that,'* she told herself. Now, she decided, she'd enjoy the hunt while she could. It was what she had came out here for, anyway! She would give Sunfall something to be honestly proud of!

Chapter 8

The morning light poured into the apprentice den, glaring against Nutpaw's eyelids, urging her awake. She scrunched her eyes against the sunlight as she yawned, slowly waking from her slumber. Suddenly, she sprang to her paws, bristling. Sunfall had wanted her to join the dawn patrol, and it was sure to be past sun-high!
Her brown fur bristled along her spine which had started to become framed by her fur as leaf-bare was drawing near, and she hurried out of the den, yelping with apology as she tripped over Daisypaw, who woke with an irritated grumble.
"Sorry!" she whispered, relieved as Daisypaw's annoyed glare softened and she joked, "I wasn't having the best dream anyway, and I may as well make myself useful."
Nutpaw purred with amusement as she peered out of the den, allowing her eyes to adjust to the light.
"Leave me something from the fresh-kill pile if you're gonna eat!" called Daisypaw as Nutmeg hurried towards (wip)